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tianity, and the entire horizon is shrouded in a horror of great darkness. The writer has done substantial service in showing the necessary sequences of a certain system of scriptural interpretation.

W. H. P. FAUNCE.

GREATER NEW YORK, N. Y.

DIE FÜNF MEGILLOTH. Erklärt von KARL BUDDE, ALFRED BERTHOLET, G. WILDEBOER. (= "Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament," Lieferung 6.) Freiburg i. B., Leipzig und Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1898. Pp. xxiv + 202. Subscriptionspreis M. 2.70; Einzelpreis M. 4.

THE scope and purpose of this new commentary on the Old Testament are set forth in the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY for 1898, pp. 658 ff., where the volume on Proverbs is reviewed. The present volume contains Canticles, by Budde; Ruth, by Bertholet; Lamentations, by Budde; Ecclesiastes and Esther, by Wildeboer. Each book is provided with a brief introduction and a compendious commentary.

Canticles is treated by Budde along the lines indicated by his article in the *New World*, March, 1894. His view is that the book is a collection of wedding songs parallel to those still sung in Syria. This implies the rejection of all attempts at a dramatic understanding, and naturally of all attempts at allegorical interpretation. The introduction here given, after discussing the place of the book in the canon, sets forth the author's theory. Of an allegorical purpose on the part of the author he finds not the slightest trace, but he gives in outline the history of interpretation in this direction. So at greater length he recounts the dramatic hypotheses. His own view is not far from that of Herder and Reuss. The Solomonic authorship is given up. Linguistic indications point to a late date, probably the Greek period.

The exposition seems to give all that is necessary to the understanding of the text—so far as it can be understood. The author emends freely on conjecture, but apparently with judgment.

In the introduction to Ruth, Bertholet discusses the age and purpose of the book. The former is found to be "relatively late," apparently post-exilic. The purpose is to defend the foreign marriages which were the subject of controversy in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The exposition gives the reviewer little to remark, except that it meets all reasonable expectations.

Budde, at the opening of the next part, discusses the form and contents of Lamentations, and proceeds to the tradition as to its authorship. This tradition, in its earliest form (2 Chron. 35:25), attributes only one *kina* to Jeremiah, the rest being assigned to the singers and songstresses (if the word be allowed). Internal evidence does not favor even so much authorship on the part of Jeremiah. The point of view is throughout quite different from his. Chaps. 2 and 4, however, were written by someone (apparently one of Zedekiah's officers) who was eyewitness of the fall of Jerusalem. The other parts of the book are later. A separate introduction is provided for each chapter, pointing out its characteristic marks.

Professor Wildeboer is already favorably known by his works on Old Testament introduction, and by the commentary on Proverbs in this same series. The position he takes in regard to the book of Ecclesiastes is sufficiently known from these works. He here dates it about 200 B. C. In describing the book he declines to share Renan's admiration on one hand, or to class it with the philosophy of Schopenhauer on the other. "Not a harmonious whole, not a product of logical thinking, but the honest confession of an earnest man who doubts much that others unreflectingly believe, but who will not give up his childhood's faith"—this is his description of the book. The current optimism which shows itself in the Proverbs is not shared by Koheleth. He is unaffected by the extravagant Messianic expectations which are reflected in the Jewish apocalypses. His reading of history taught him to look for nothing new under the sun. Yet he is not an atheist or a materialist. In his struggle with the problems of the universe he still holds that God is righteous, and that in due time he will act as judge.

The same author gives us the exposition of Esther, which, he says, was written with the purpose of explaining the feast of Purim and of enforcing its observance. The feast itself was probably borrowed from the Babylonians (not the Persians, as heretofore supposed), and the legend which explains it is an old Babylonian myth converted to Hebraism. Esther is Ishtar, Mordecai is Marduk. Their enemy, Haman, reminds one of an Elamitic god, Humman, naturally the enemy of Marduk. The deposed Vashti also appears (or her name appears) in Elamitic mythology. The details may be read in our author's introduction. They come primarily from Professor Jensen, who will probably publish his theory in full before long. The outline already given makes us desire more.

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